

Funding for Public Education – A Formula for Success

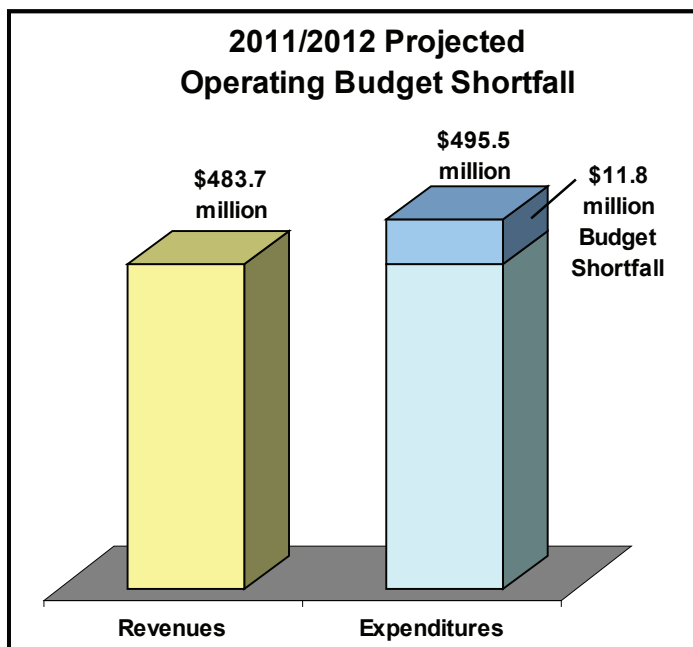
Public education has been underfunded in B.C. for many years. While B.C. students perform well in national and international assessments, the ongoing uncertainty, instability and lack of full funding for public education in the province has prevented collaboration and the development of partnerships that could transform a good system into the world's best.

Vancouver's public education budget

Vancouver School Board (VSB) has a budget of almost \$500 million. The majority of revenue (95%) comes from provincial grants, making provincial funding the primary factor in determining the educational services and programs that can be provided in Vancouver.

Funding shortfalls – reasons and contributing factors

There is a significant gap in 2011/2012 between forecasted district expenditures of \$495.5 million, and projected revenues of \$483.7 million. As a result, the VSB is facing an operating budget funding shortfall of \$11.8 million in the coming year. Cumulative net funding shortfalls for the VSB since 2002/2003 could total \$80 million by 2011/2012.



The VSB is not the only school district in B.C. that has experienced major shortfalls year after year – it is a story that has been repeated over and over in school districts throughout the province.

The reason for chronic underfunding is clear: a per-student funding formula introduced in 2002/2003 that does not fund cost increases regularly faced by districts, nor fixed costs that remain constant with small changes in enrolment. These costs include:

- salary increments
- increasing costs of employee benefits (e.g. CPP, EI, MSP, extended health and dental, pensions)
- inflation on goods and services
- fixed facility related and school and district administration costs that do not vary with small changes in enrolment

Public education funding – a formula for success

The VSB requires additional provincial funding of between \$8 to \$12 million for 2011/2012 in order to maintain programs and services at existing levels.

At the VSB, our goal is to work with the B.C. government to develop a new stable, predictable and appropriate funding formula for public education in the 21st century. We believe this is a goal that all public education stakeholders share.

For public education to succeed, funding for school districts needs to be stable and predictable, so that school districts can plan accurately and responsibly over several years. The funding formula also needs to be revised to reflect the fixed and growing costs facing school districts.

The VSB recommends a formal and open review of public education funding be undertaken to end the uncertainty and chronic instability of the current funding formula. This review should include representation from school trustees, school and district administration, employee groups, the public and other stakeholders working with the B.C. government to identify the best possible education outcomes for our students.

VSB at a glance

- 109 schools
- 6 adult education centres
- 56,600 students
- 5,490 FTE employees, including 3,130 teachers, 810 education assistants, 194 principals and vice principals and 1,356 other professionals and support staff